

Legislative Oversight Committee

Staff Study of the
South Carolina First Steps to School Readiness
September 1, 2015



THIS STAFF STUDY IS PREPARED BY THE STAFF OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES AND IS NOT THE EXPRESSION OF THE HOUSE LEGISLATIVE OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE, ANY OF ITS SUBCOMMITTEES, OR OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES. IT IS STRICTLY FOR THE INTERNAL USE AND BENEFIT OF MEMBERS OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES AND MAY NOT BE CONSTRUED BY A COURT OF LAW AS AN EXPRESSION OF LEGISLATIVE INTENT.

Education and Cultural Subcommittee Meeting December 11, 2015



STATED PURPOSE OF OVERSIGHT

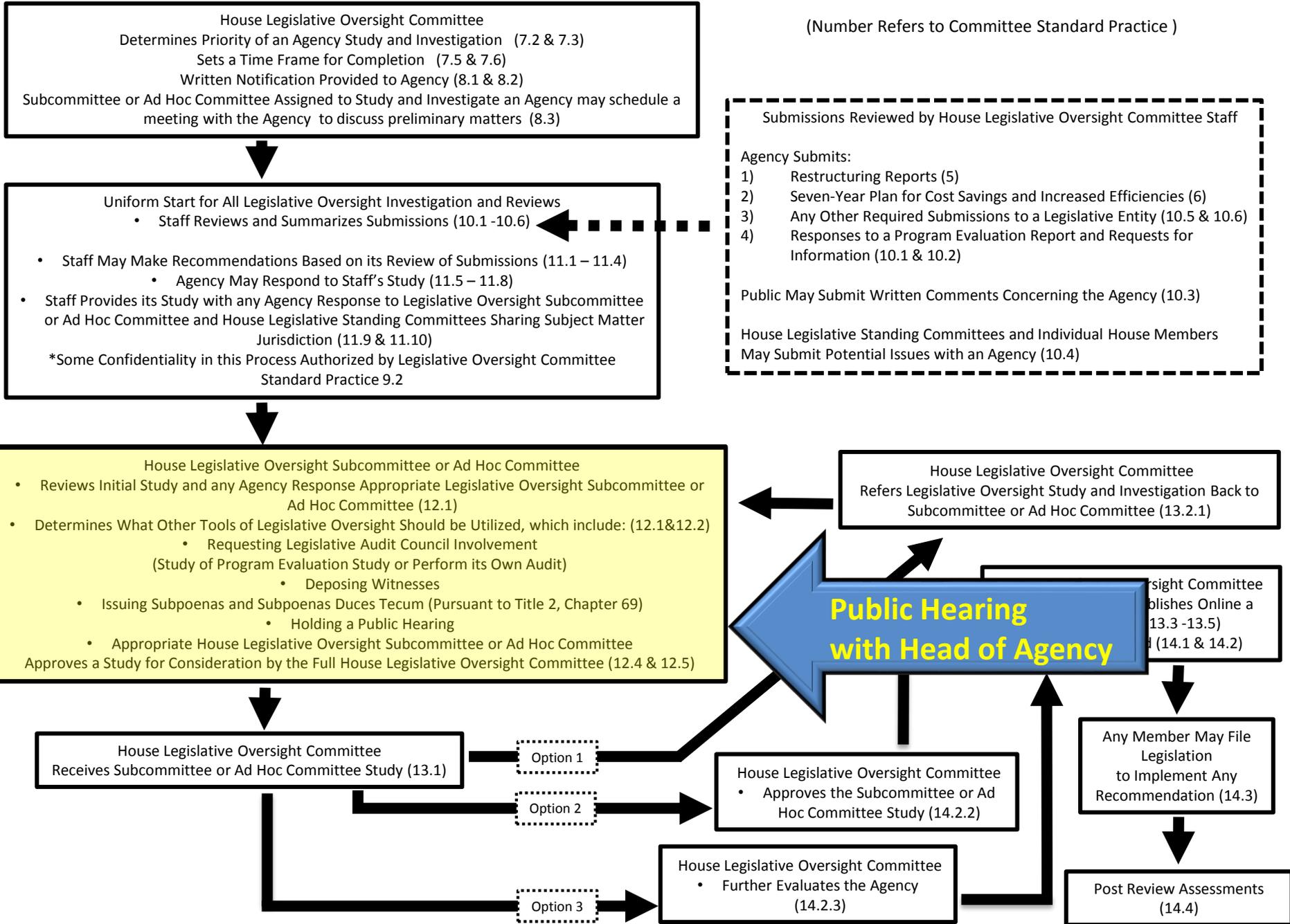


The purpose of these oversight studies and investigations is to **determine if agency laws and programs** within the subject matter jurisdiction of a standing committee:

- (1) are being **implemented and carried out in accordance with the intent of the General Assembly**; and
- (2) should be **continued, curtailed, or even eliminated**.

House Legislative Oversight Committee's Study and Investigation Process

(Number Refers to Committee Standard Practice)



House Legislative Oversight Committee's Study and Investigation Process

(Number Refers to Committee Standard Practice)

House Legislative Oversight Committee
 Determines Priority of an Agency Study and Investigation (7.2 & 7.3)
 Sets a Time Frame for Completion (7.5 & 7.6)
 Written Notification Provided to Agency (8.1 & 8.2)
 Subcommittee or Ad Hoc Committee Assigned to Study and Investigate an Agency may schedule a meeting with the Agency to discuss preliminary matters (8.3)

Submissions Reviewed by House Legislative Oversight Committee Staff

Agency Submits:

- 1) Restructuring Reports (5)
- 2) Seven-Year Plan for Cost Savings and Increased Efficiencies (6)
- 3) Any Other Required Submissions to a Legislative Entity (10.5 & 10.6)
- 4) Responses to a Program Evaluation Report and Requests for Information (10.1 & 10.2)

Public May Submit Written Comments Concerning the Agency (10.3)

House Legislative Standing Committees and Individual House Members May Submit Potential Issues with an Agency (10.4)

Uniform Start for All Legislative Oversight Investigation and Reviews

- Staff Reviews and Summarizes Submissions (10.1 -10.6)
- Staff May Make Recommendations on its Review of Submissions (11.1 – 11.4)
 - Agency May Respond to Staff's Study (11.5 – 11.8)
- Staff Provides its Study with a Recommendation to Legislative Oversight Subcommittee or Ad Hoc Committee and House Legislative Oversight Committees Sharing Subject Matter Jurisdiction
- *Some Confidentiality in this Process Applicable to Legislative Oversight Committee Standard Practice

Full Committee approves and publishes online

House Legislative Oversight Subcommittee or Ad Hoc Committee

- Reviews Initial Study and any Agency Response Appropriate to Subcommittee or Ad Hoc Committee (12.1)
- Determines What Other Tools of Legislative Oversight Should be Used (12.2)
 - Requesting Legislative Audit Council Involvement (Study of Program Evaluation Study or Perform its Own)
 - Deposing Witnesses
 - Issuing Subpoenas and Subpoenas Duces Tecum (Pursuant to Title 2)
 - Holding a Public Hearing
- Appropriate House Legislative Oversight Subcommittee or Ad Hoc Committee Approves a Study for Consideration by the Full House Legislative Oversight Committee (12.4 & 12.5)

House Legislative Oversight Committee Refers Legislative Oversight Study and Investigation Back to Subcommittee or Ad Hoc Committee (13.2.1)

House Legislative Oversight Committee Approves and Publishes Online a Final Study (13.3 -13.5)
 Briefing Offered (14.1 & 14.2)

House Legislative Oversight Committee Receives Subcommittee or Ad Hoc Committee Study (13.1)

Option 1

Option 2

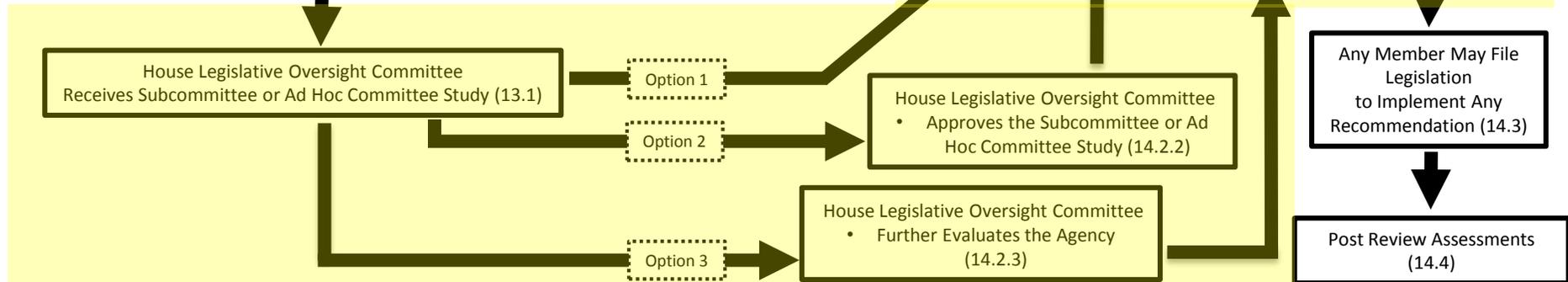
Option 3

House Legislative Oversight Committee Approves the Subcommittee or Ad Hoc Committee Study (14.2.2)

House Legislative Oversight Committee Further Evaluates the Agency (14.2.3)

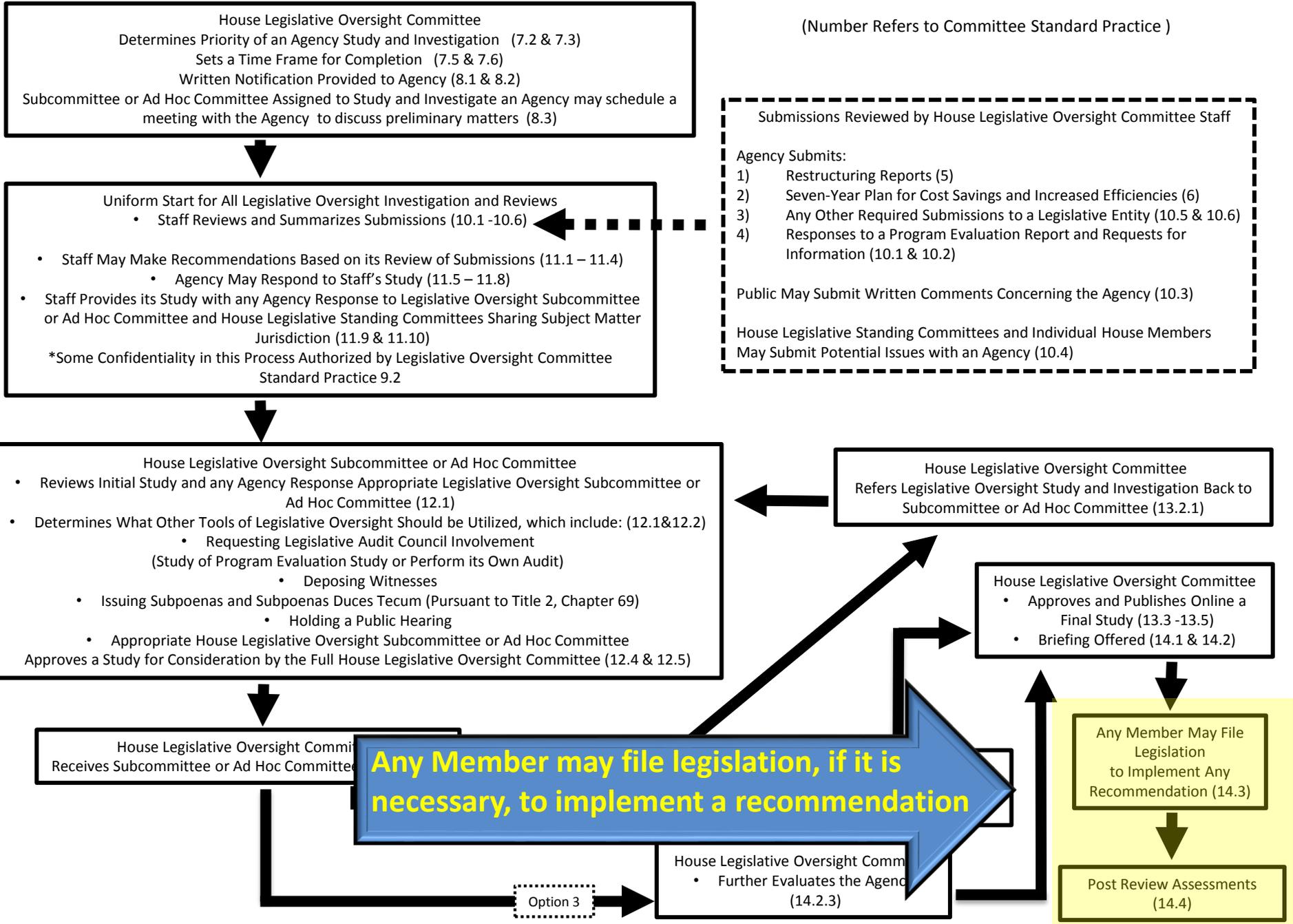
Any Member May File Legislation to Implement Any Recommendation (14.3)

Post Review Assessments (14.4)



House Legislative Oversight Committee's Study and Investigation Process

(Number Refers to Committee Standard Practice)



EXPECTATIONS



What to Expect

- **Oversight Studies** by your elected Representatives
- Ability for the **public to be involved in the process**
- **Identification** by the House and Agency of areas for improvement within the agency
- **Recommendations** for improvements
- **Central source of information** for the public and legislators

What NOT to expect

- Finding every issue or potential area of improvement at every agency
- Solving every issue at every agency
- Solutions or recommendations that satisfy every legislator, agency personnel and member of the public.

Agency's Mission

Staff Study Visual Summary Table 2 on page 12, Page 13, and Page 17 under Responsibilities



The agency states that its mission is to “(1) provide parents with access to the support they might seek and want to strengthen their families and to promote the optimal development of their preschool children; (2) increase comprehensive services so children have reduced risk for major physical, developmental, and learning problems; (3) promote high quality preschool programs that provide a healthy environment that will promote normal growth and development; (4) provide services so all children receive the protection, nutrition, and health care needed to thrive in the early years of life so they arrive at school ready to learn; and (5) mobilize communities to focus efforts on providing enhanced services to support families and their young children so as to enable every child to reach school healthy and ready to learn.”

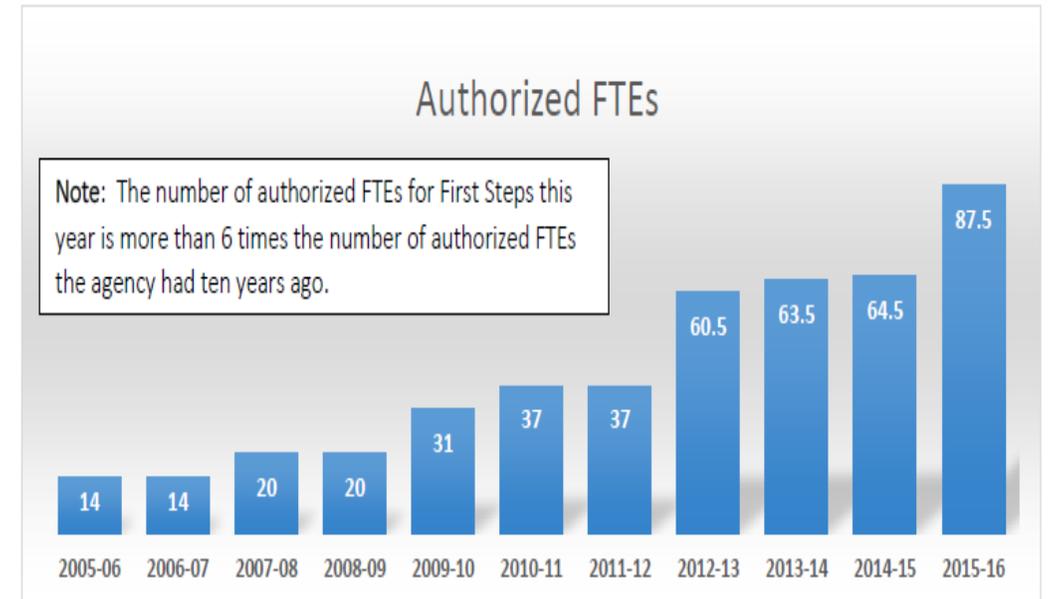
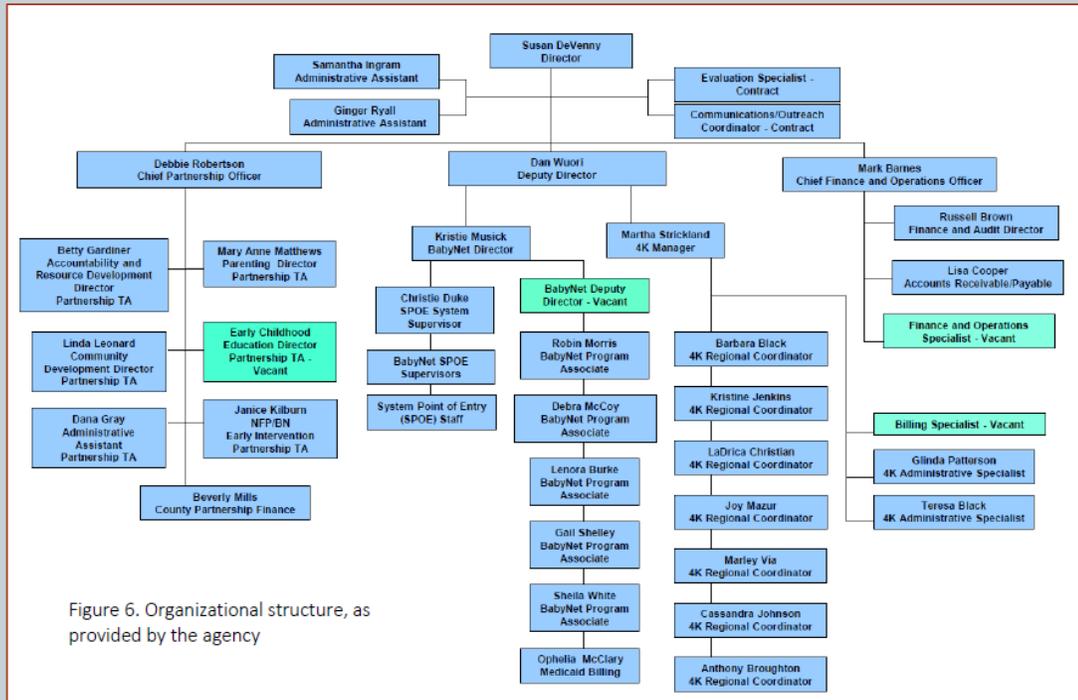
Organizational Structure & Full Time Employees

Staff Study – pages 22-23, Figure 6 & Figure 7



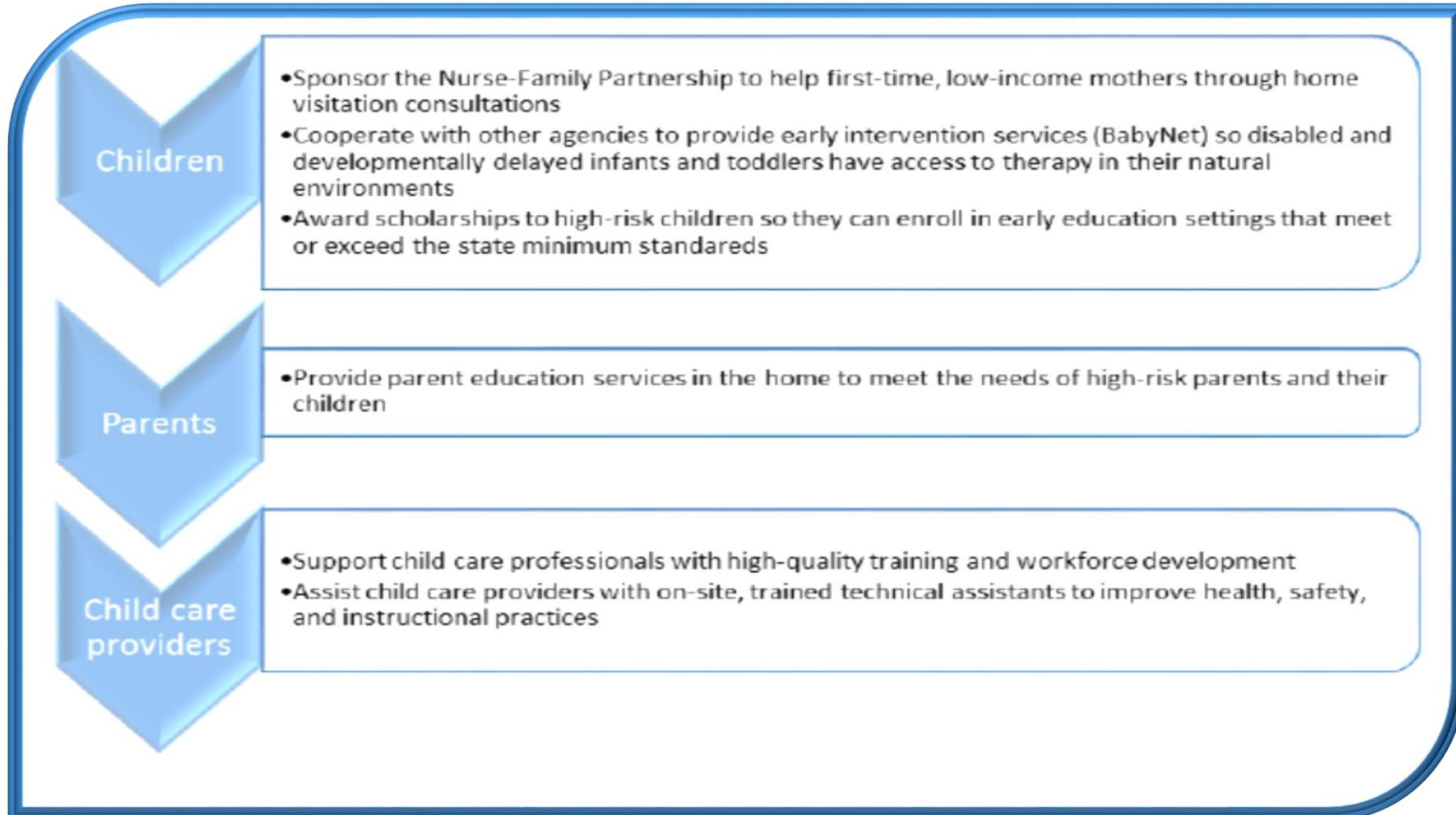
Agency Organizational Structure

Authorized FTEs for the past 10 years



Services and Products Provided by the Agency

Staff Study – page 18, Table 3



Relationships

Staff Study – pages 26, Figure 8 and Table 8

Entity	Partner	Customer	Stakeholder
BabyNet Clients		✓	
BabyNet Service Providers			✓
Child Care Centers		✓	
Early Childhood Education Clients		✓	
Early Childhood Education Providers			✓
Family Strengthening Clients		✓	
Local Partnership Boards			✓
Nurse Family Partnership Clients		✓	
Parents of Young Children			✓
SC Department of Disabilities and Special Needs	✓		
SC Department of Education	✓		
SC Department of Social Services	✓		
SC School For the Deaf and the Blind	✓		
School Transition/Countdown to Kindergarten Clients		✓	

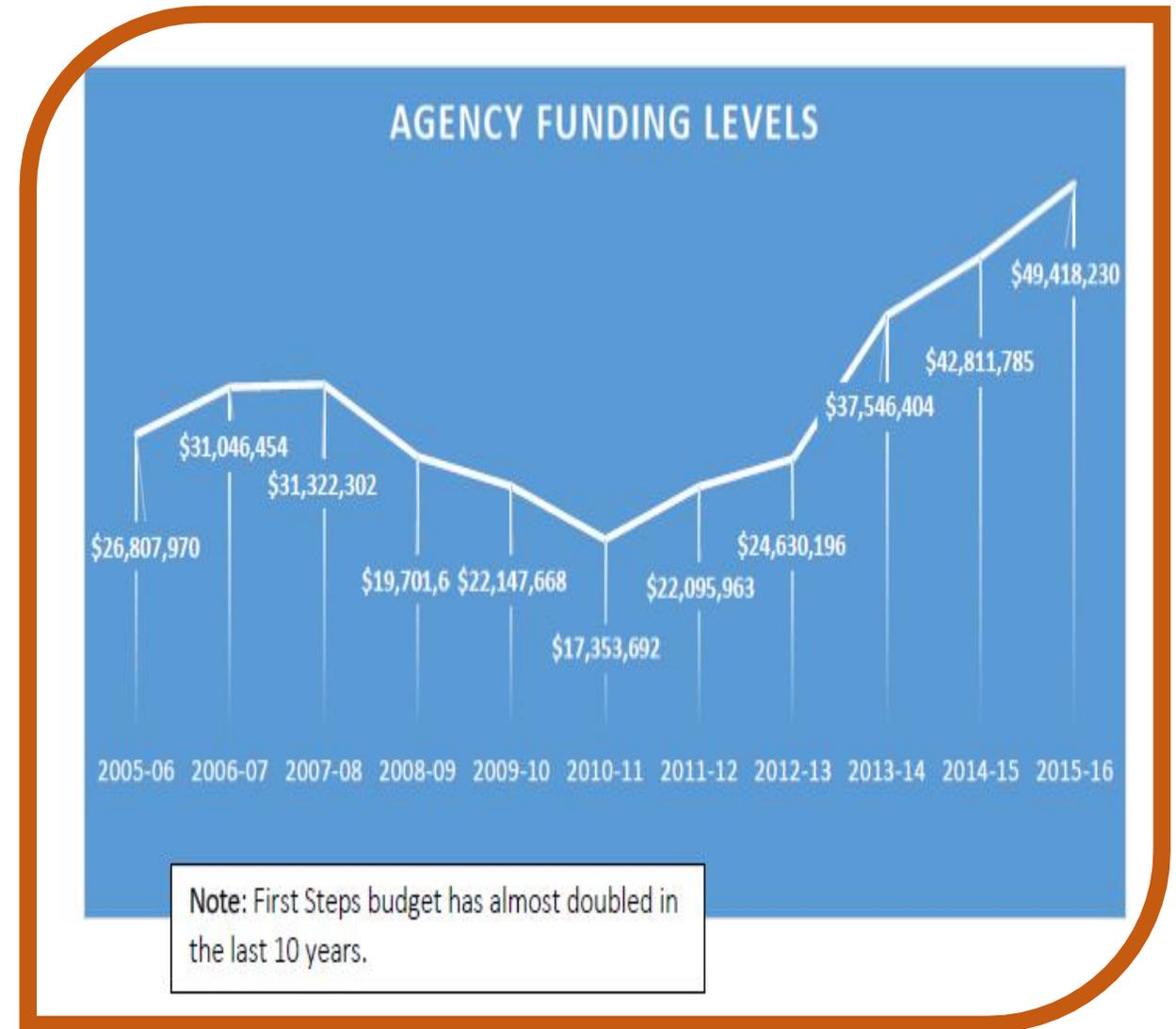
Total Funding

Staff Study – pages 27-28, Table 10 and Figure 9

Year	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08
Total Budget*	\$26,807,970 (21,807,970 ¹⁶⁹ + 2,000,000 ¹⁷⁰ + 3,000,000 ¹⁷¹)	\$31,046,454 (21,187,878 ¹⁷² + 2,000,000 ¹⁷³ + 1,858,576 ¹⁷⁴ + 4,000,000 ¹⁷⁵ + 2,000,000 ¹⁷⁶)	\$31,322,302 (21,463,726 ¹⁷⁷ + 2,000,000 ¹⁷⁸ + 7,858,576 ¹⁷⁹)
Increase or Decrease/year		+15.81%	+0.89%
Increase or Decrease since fiscal year 2005-06		+15.81%	+16.84%

Year	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12
Total Budget*	\$24,785,184 (21,482,858 ¹⁸⁰ + 1,883,540 ¹⁸¹ + 3,200,000 ¹⁸² - 1,781,214 ¹⁸³)	\$22,147,668 (20,656,821 ¹⁸⁴ + 1,490,847 ¹⁸⁵)	\$17,353,692 (15,566,167 ¹⁸⁶ + 1,490,847 ¹⁸⁷ + 296,678 ¹⁸⁸)	\$22,095,963 (20,090,881 ¹⁸⁹ + 1,490,847 ¹⁹⁰ + 514,235 ¹⁹¹)
Increase or Decrease/year	-20.87%	-10.64%	-21.65%	+24.36%
Increase or Decrease since fiscal year 2005-06	-7.55%	-17.38%	-35.27%	-19.50%

Year	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16
Total Budget*	\$24,630,196 ¹⁹²	\$37,546,404 (36,104,404 ¹⁹³ + 1,442,000 ¹⁹⁴)	\$42,811,785 (15,283,000 ¹⁹⁵ + 26,200,685 ¹⁹⁶ + 838,100 ¹⁹⁷ + 490,000 ¹⁹⁸)	\$49,418,230 (20,282,622 ¹⁹⁹ + 29,135,608 ²⁰⁰)
Increase or Decrease/year	+14.13%	+52.44%	+14.02%	+15.43%
Increase or Decrease since fiscal year 2005-06	-8.12%	+40.06%	+59.70%	+84.34%



Agency's Plan

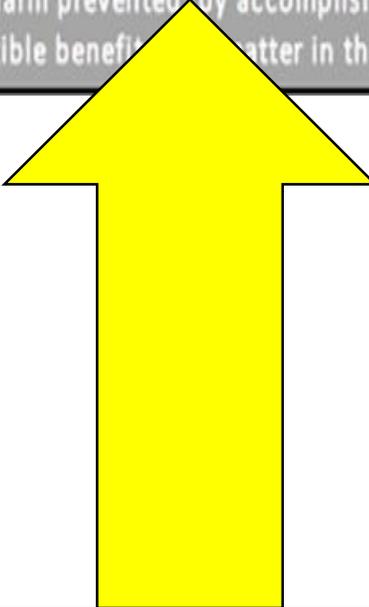
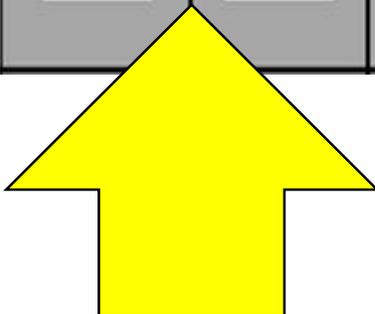
Staff Study – page 32-40, Table 13 and Table 14

Goals, Strategies and Objectives			% of Total Spending		Outcome	
<u>G</u>	<u>S</u>	<u>O</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>2013-14</u>	<u>2014-15</u>	(Public benefit provided, or harm prevented, by accomplishment of this goal, strategy or objective (i.e. tangible benefits that matter in the lives of citizens))
Goal 1			Provide parents with access to the support they might seek and want to strengthen their families and to promote the optimal development of their preschool children (59-152-30)	18.77% \$6,947,436 (total of strategies and objectives within goal)	13.56% \$4,523,672 (total of strategies and objectives within goal)	Parents are the first and best teachers of their children. By providing them the supports needed to strengthen their families and optimize the development of their children, SC will benefit from a host of outcomes, ranging from a more educated populace and skilled workforce to the prevention of specific social service, Medicaid and educational costs.
	Strategy 1.1		Implement high-quality parent education, home visitation and family literacy strategies to families through local partnerships, where local boards identify these services as a need	17.97% \$6,650,249 Parent Education, Home Visitation and Family Literacy Strategies (Non-NFP) Expenditures	12.78% \$4,264,515	By investing in evidence-based home visitation, First Steps equips clients to support the optimal development and long-term educational success of their children.
		Objective 1.1.1	Ensure that home visitation clients are served within model guidelines related to the intensity and duration of services	Information Not Provided	Information Not Provided	By ensuring that First Steps' home visitation clients meet model specific guidelines, the public can be assured that clients receive an intervention of sufficient dosage to match the researched outcomes.
			How agency measures its performance:	(1) Local partnership education and support calls/webinars (14 in 2013-14; 11 thru 4/30/15) (2) Individualized technical assistance hours to support strategy implementation and local partnership planning (9630 in 2013-14; Agency failed to report thru 4/30/15) (3) Local partnership strategy plans reviewed and approved (46 in 2013-14; 46 thru 4/30/15) (4) Home visitation clients receiving appropriate service intensity with individual home visits (2.3 visits per month in 2013-14; 2.28 visits per month thru 4/30/15) (5) Home visitation, family literacy and scholarship clients are receiving appropriate health and developmental screenings (2009 in 2013-14; 1879 thru 4/30/15) (6) First Steps clients are receiving program services long enough to have a significant impact on parenting skills and school readiness (83.26% retained 9 months or more in 2013-14; 80.54% retained 9 months or more thru 4/30/15) (7) Home visitation clients are increasing their parenting skills (.55 increase on 5 point scale in 2013-14; .52 increase on 5 point scale thru 4/30/15) (8) Home visitation clients are increasing their interactive literacy skills (.38 adult, .47 children increase on 3 point scale in 2013-14; .44 adult, .52 children increase on 3 point scale thru 4/30/15)		
						Assoc. Agency Programs Local Partnerships and State-Level Partnership

Agency's Plan

Staff Study – page 19-27, Table 9

Goals, Strategies and Objectives			% of Total Spending		Outcome
<u>G</u>	<u>S</u>	<u>O</u>	<u>2013-14</u>	<u>2014-15</u>	(Public benefit provided, or harm prevented, by accomplishment of this goal, strategy or objective (i.e. tangible benefits that matter in the lives of citizens))
Description					



% of Total Spending = Percent of the total agency spending that went toward each goal and objective. The amount for each goal is obtained by adding together the total amounts for all the objectives under that goal.

Outcome = Public benefit provided, or harm prevented, by accomplishment of a goal or objective (i.e. tangible benefits that matter in the lives of citizens). If a goal or objective does not provide some type of tangible benefit to any citizens in South Carolina, the agency should consider revising or eliminating it from the agency's strategic plan.

Agency's Plan

Staff Study – page 19-27, Table 9

Goals, Strategies and Objectives			% of Total Spending		Outcome	
<u>G</u>	<u>S</u>	<u>O</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>2013-14</u>	<u>2014-15</u>	(Public benefit provided, or harm prevented, by accomplishment of this goal, strategy or objective (i.e. tangible benefits that matter in the lives of citizens))
Goal 1			Provide parents with access to the support they might seek and want to strengthen their families and to promote the optimal development of their preschool children (59-152-30)	18.77% \$6,947,436 (total of strategies and objectives within goal)	13.56% \$4,523,672 (total of strategies and objectives within goal)	Parents are the first and best teachers of their children. By providing them the supports needed to strengthen their families and optimize the development of their children, SC will benefit from a host of outcomes, ranging from a more educated populace and skilled workforce to the prevention of specific social service, Medicaid and educational costs.

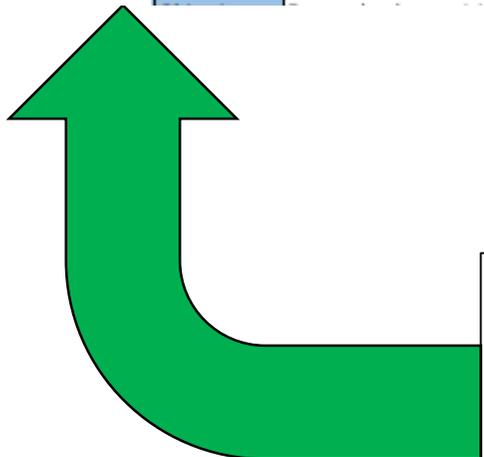
Goals = Statement of what the agency hopes to achieve in the next 2-3 years. At the highest level, each agency's goals should logically and naturally derive from the agency's mission statement.

Mission: The agency states that its mission is to “(1) provide parents with access to the support they might seek and want to strengthen their families and to promote the optimal development of their preschool children; (2) increase comprehensive services so children have reduced risk for major physical, developmental, and learning problems; (3) promote high quality preschool programs that provide a healthy environment that will promote normal growth and development; (4) provide services so all children receive the protection, nutrition, and health care needed to thrive in the early years of life so they arrive at school ready to learn; and (5) mobilize communities to focus efforts on providing enhanced services to support families and their young children so as to enable every child to reach school healthy and ready to learn.”³

Agency's Plan

Staff Study – page 19-27, Table 9

G	S	O	Goals, Strategies and Objectives Description	% of Total Spending		Outcome (Public benefit provided, or harm prevented, by accomplishment of this goal, strategy or objective (i.e. tangible benefits that matter in the lives of citizens))
				2013-14	2014-15	
Goal 1			Provide parents with access to the support they might seek and want to strengthen their families and to promote the optimal development of their preschool children (59-152-30)	18.77% \$6,947,436 (total of strategies and objectives within goal)	13.56% \$4,523,672 (total of strategies and objectives within goal)	Parents are the first and best teachers of their children. By providing them the supports needed to strengthen their families and optimize the development of their children, SC will benefit from a host of outcomes, ranging from a more educated populace and skilled workforce to the prevention of specific social service, Medicaid and educational costs.
	Strategy 1.1		Implement high-quality parent education, home visitation and family literacy strategies to families through local partnerships, where local boards identify these services as a need	17.97% \$6,650,249 Parent Education, Home Visitation and Family Literacy Strategies (Non-NFP) Expenditures	12.78% \$4,264,515	By investing in evidence-based home visitation, First Steps equips clients to support the optimal development and long-term educational success of their children.

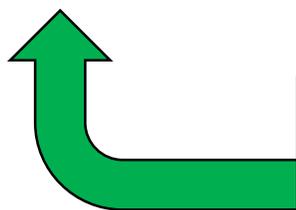


Strategy = A concise statement of a high-level approach an agency is taking in pursuit of a goal. It is a descriptive, complex action comprised of multiple action steps. Good action verbs to start the description of a strategy include develop, design, establish, enhance, implement, etc.

Agency's Plan

Staff Study – page 19-27, Table 9

Goals, Strategies and Objectives			% of Total Spending		Outcome
G	S	O	2013-14	2014-15	(Public benefit provided, or harm prevented, by accomplishment of this goal, strategy or objective (i.e. tangible benefits that matter in the lives of citizens))
Goal 2			9.63% \$3,562,870 (total of strategies and objectives within goal)	7.67% \$2,560,261 (total of strategies and objectives within goal)	The academic success of young children is powerfully shaped by physical, social and emotional forces outside of the classroom. By connecting client families to the comprehensive supports they need to succeed, First Steps enhances school readiness through the elimination of barriers to learning.
	Strategy 2.1		Information Not Provided	Information Not Provided	By serving as a state and local early childhood service portal for families, First Steps supports the needs of the state's citizens by creating a "no wrong door" policy through which parents and children can be effectively connected to both services under the First Steps umbrella and those provided by additional public and private partners around the state.
		Objective 2.1.1	Information Not Provided	Information Not Provided	By engaging local partnerships in planning this statutory requirement for FY17, First Steps ensures that its local network will be prepared to offer this valuable service statewide, increasing efficiency and connecting SC families to the public and private resources they need to support the optimal development of their young children.
					<u>Assoc. Agency Programs</u> Local Partnerships and State-Level Partnership Supports; and Policy and Accountability



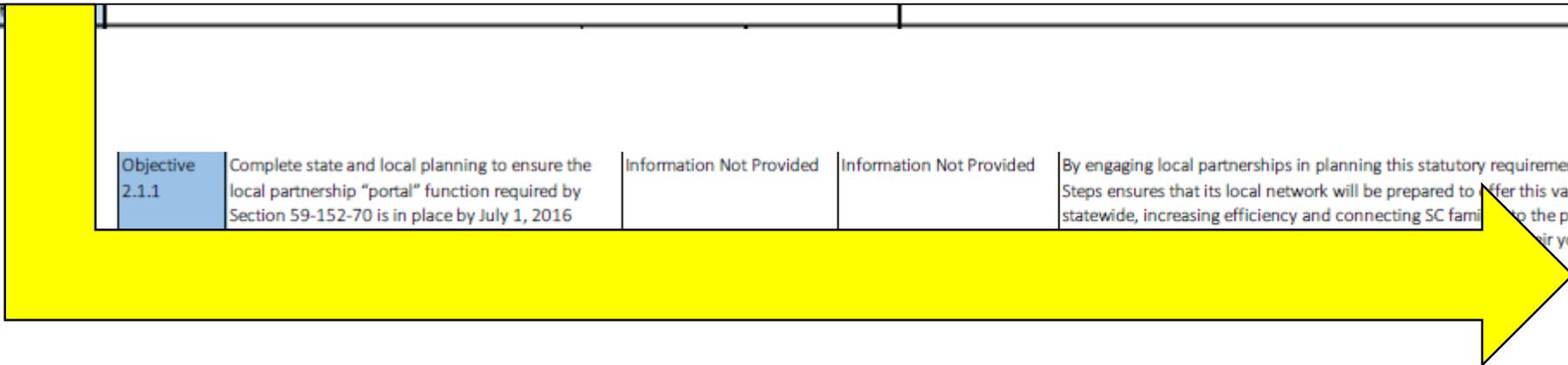
Objective = Specific, measurable and achievable description of an effort the agency is actively implementing over a defined period of time as part of a broader strategy to meet a certain goal. These have to be measurable and time bound because they let the agency know if the strategy worked.

Agency's Plan

Staff Study – page 19-27, Table 9

Assoc. Agency Programs = Programs the agency states relate to a particular objective. A program may relate to a single objective, multiple objectives within the same goal, or even multiple objectives under different goals.

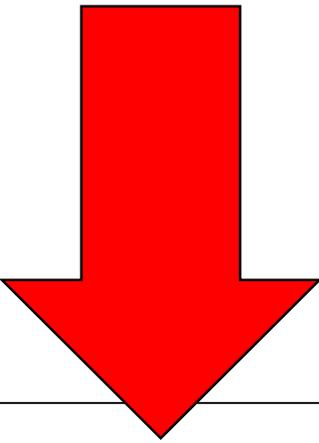
Objective					
Objective 2.1.1	Complete state and local planning to ensure the local partnership "portal" function required by Section 59-152-70 is in place by July 1, 2016	Information Not Provided	Information Not Provided	By engaging local partnerships in planning this statutory requirement for FY17, First Steps ensures that its local network will be prepared to offer this valuable service statewide, increasing efficiency and connecting SC families to the public and private care services for their young children.	<u>Assoc. Agency Programs</u> Local Partnerships and State-Level Partnership Supports; and Policy and Accountability



Agency's Plan

Staff Study – page 19-27, Table 9

Performance Measures = Method for gauging whether or not the objective is being accomplished efficiently and intended results are being achieved.



How agency measures its performance:	(1) Local partnership education and support calls/webinars (14 in 2013-14; 11 thru 4/30/15) (2) Individualized technical assistance hours to support strategy implementation and local partnership planning (9630 in 2013-14; Agency failed to report thru 4/30/15) (3) Local partnership strategy plans reviewed and approved (46 in 2013-14; 46 thru 4/30/15)
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Agency's Plan

Staff Study – page 19-27, Table 9

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Assoc. Agency Programs
Local Partnerships and
State-Level Partnership

Potential Negative Impact

Staff Study – page 42, Table 15

- Most potential negative impact on the public if the agency’s programs were to have substandard performance.
- At what level does the agency think the General Assembly should be put on notice of a potential problem.

Program	Potential negative impact	Level at which the agency thinks the General Assembly should be put on notice
Local Partnerships and Partnership Supports (i.e. Local Boards) Program Effectiveness and Efficiency Ranking: 1 (1 is most effective and efficient)	The most recent external evaluation of First Steps suggested that Local Boards are the "batteries" powering discussion of the needs of South Carolina's young children. Their underperformance would result in decreased efficiency and collaboration, the loss of a key community portal for families and the diminished capacity of funded services.	Local Boards are held to a detailed set of program accountability measures, reviewed as part of their annual grant application. The General Assembly should be put on notice if the number of conditionally approved (potentially underperforming) strategies rises.
First Steps 4K Program Effectiveness and Efficiency Ranking: 2	If the First Steps 4K program were to underperform, students would not receive a high-quality 4K experience- limiting school readiness.	First Steps provides intensive monitoring of local 4K providers to prevent negative impact. The General Assembly should be put on notice in the event that First Steps 4K results lag significantly behind those of public schools.
BabyNet Program Effectiveness and Efficiency Ranking: 3	If BabyNet underperforms SC children will not receive timely early intervention services, diminishing their chance of entering school ready to succeed.	BabyNet was moved to First Steps in 2010 as a 17-year-old system with chronic federal performance deficits. First Steps has worked diligently in the years since to reconstitute a system of general supervision and enact policies required by the federal government to the benefit of its client families. While this corrective action is ongoing, First Steps thanks the General Assembly for its attention to program needs in the proposed FY16 budget. New staff and resources hold the potential to significantly impact SC's federal Part C performance.
Policy and Accountability Program Effectiveness and Efficiency Ranking: 4	Without an effective policy, oversight and accountability functions, the efficacy of the public's investment in First Steps could not be assured.	First Steps undergoes regular performance reviews, with the most recent finding that the initiative is meeting legislative goals partially due to effective accountability and fiscal structures within the State Office. The General Assembly should be put on notice in the event this is no longer the case.

Public Comments

Staff Study – page 26



**OVERALL, WHAT IS YOUR CURRENT OPINION OF
FIRST STEPS TO SCHOOL READINESS?**

Positive or Very Positive – 57.7%

Negative or Very Negative – 27.3%

Do not have an opinion – 15%

Notably, only 593 answered the question while 1,195 survey respondents skipped the question

Public Comments

Staff Study – page 26



CORRECTION TO STAFF STUDY:

When asked to do list any comments, concerns or suggestions about the agency 195 survey respondents did

- 42 comments relate to areas for improvement
- 43 comments are positive
- 48 comments are general in nature
- 22 comments question the need for the agency
- 16 comments pertain funding
- 16 comments pertain to local boards
- 15 comments relate to management
- 8 comments suggest placement of the agency under the Department of Education
- 7 comments indicate unfamiliarity with First Steps

Agency's Recommendations

Staff Study – page 13, Visual Summary Table 3, and page 43

Agency's Recommendations*

General

- The agency reported that it does not presently have any operational recommendations due to recent changes in its organization, but that it may have recommendations in the future
- The agency recommends deleting two provisos as well as modifying five others and further the agency has provided the bases for its suggestions in its Program Evaluation Report